

Whitefriars First and Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102184
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	335854
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	David Scott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms M L Nolan
Headteacher	Mrs L Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors made 17 visits to lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation documents, assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and 81 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the success of the school's initiatives to raise the quality of pupils' learning
- teachers' use of assessment information
- the provision for able pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the steps the school is taking to improve attendance and how successful they have been.

Information about the school

The school serves a very diverse community. Around two thirds of the pupils, a proportion much higher than average, has a home language other than English. Approximately a quarter of the pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Nine out of ten pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups; the largest of these groups being other Asian, Asian Indian and Black African. Just over a quarter of pupils, a higher proportion to that found nationally, have special educational needs and/or disabilities the largest group being those with moderate learning difficulties. Almost half of pupils, much higher than the national average, are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils that join the school at times other than the usual starting points is much higher than that found nationally. Since the last inspection the school has gained a number of awards including the Sportsmark and the British Council International Award. During the recent past the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, but staffing is now stable.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision has one Nursery group and two Reception classes. Children also join Reception from a wide variety of other pre-school settings. The school has a children's centre on site which opened in 2007 as part of its Extended Services provision. However, under its current registration it is not eligible for inspection under the section 5 framework.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. 'The school is a happy and friendly place and my three children have nothing but high praise for their experience at Whitefriars.' This statement reflects the positive views expressed by pupils and the overwhelming majority of parents. The school is a welcoming and harmonious community, where pupils are happy and safe and make sound academic progress. They behave well and respect the views of others and have a well-developed sense of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle. This was demonstrated in the discussion with pupils where they spoke with maturity about the various dangers to health, such as smoking, and the benefits of 'Wake up, Shake up' and Yoga! Good pastoral support and guidance, especially for the pupils and their families who are experiencing difficulties, make a strong contribution to the school's improving relationships with parents.

The school faces exceptionally challenging circumstances due to the high levels of pupil mobility throughout the year. Over the years, this has had a significant impact on attainment. Pupils who join the school at unexpected times are well supported, so that they make satisfactory progress but many do not reach average levels of attainment, often due to interruptions in learning, emotional difficulties or because they arrive with little or no English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English also do as well as their peers because of good support and one-to-one tuition. Despite this strong focus the school has not yet managed to ensure able pupils achieve consistently well in English, mathematics and science.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good practice, but the quality across the school is variable. This is because activities are not always closely matched to pupils' varied needs. Teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions or provide specific targets to help pupils make consistently good progress. Sometimes teachers' explanations are overlong which reduces the opportunity for pupils to think for themselves and to develop and explain their ideas. When this happens, the pace of learning slows.

Despite sound teaching, a stimulating curriculum and good care and support, not all pupils attend regularly. The school has worked assiduously to improve attendance, which is broadly average. Nevertheless, there are families who do not observe the school holiday dates.

Information is used regularly to identify what the school does well and to plan for improvement and to track pupils' progress. Nevertheless, analysis is not always sufficiently robust to improve all pupils' progress. Criteria against which to judge the

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impact of any changes are not always sufficiently measurable. Some leaders are new in post and the school recognises that further training and coaching will be needed to help all staff become more effective in raising standards. Since the last inspection the school has begun to raise attainment, reduced exclusions and improved overall attendance. These demonstrate that the school has the necessary capacity to make the further improvements that are needed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, so that they are consistently good, by:
 - ensuring teachers use day-to-day assessments to provide activities that are challenging and are carefully matched to the varied needs of all pupils
 - asking probing questions in lessons which give pupils opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully, especially for more able pupils
 - reviewing targets more systematically with pupils so they clearly understand how to improve.
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers at all levels on school improvement by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly by setting quantifiable measures against which to evaluate success
 - working more closely with families to improve attendance
 - extending the capacity of leaders still further to manage their areas of responsibility through coaching and training.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils behave well, and develop into polite, thoughtful and considerate young people. The overwhelming majority of pupils are enthusiastic about their tasks and respond appropriately to teachers' requests. Year 5, for example, thoroughly enjoyed their literacy lesson on the mystery poem 'Something has happened' where they had to start thinking about 'how, who, why, when', which led to a lively discussion where pupils made good progress in their understanding. In Year 3 pupils thoroughly enjoyed their lesson on how to use adjectives by creatively using technology to set the scene and stimulate their imaginations. Children in the Reception class also responded well to using different objects such as a cup, pig puppet and a sock to generate the sounds to build new words.

Standards pupils reach by the time they leave are improving, but are still low. This is largely because many have not had the benefit of being in the school from the normal starting point. From low starting points when they enter the school, pupils are making secure progress and achieving satisfactorily. Initiatives such as Narrowing the Gap, Extra

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Mile and one-to-one tuition are helping small groups and individual pupils who are behind to make up lost ground. The tracking of these pupils' progress shows that some have made good progress.

Pupils get on well together and are keen to engage in the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. They are proud to be school council members as they were elected following 'real-life' election procedures. Pupils are aware of the world of work and most are soundly prepared for their futures. They participate in sustainability and re-cycling projects and gain first-hand experience of the global community through the school's link with a school in Uganda. The school has worked hard with both pupils and parents to emphasise the importance of good attendance. These efforts have had a fair measure of success and have succeeded in raising the pupils' attendance which is broadly average. Nevertheless, too many families still take holidays in term time.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Through the work associated with the national awards they understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, participating in sporting pursuits and their heightened awareness of global issues. Whitefriars instils in its pupils a sense of purpose and self-belief that underpins their good spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Above all, they enjoy learning; as one pupil wrote, echoing the views of many, 'I love school because it is a good place to learn. The teachers are very friendly and everyone shows respect.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

Pupils experience a good range of activities. Teaching is improving due to some effective monitoring and is satisfactory with some being good. Pupils who have particular learning needs are well supported in lessons because teaching assistants are generally well deployed. On occasions, introductions are over long and inhibit opportunities for pupils to learn on their own. As a result, more able children do not always have their skills and understanding fully extended. The way in which teachers check pupils' understanding of the work in lessons also varies. Questioning is sometimes not targeted well enough for the teachers to be sure that all pupils really grasp the work. Although there are pockets of good practice, marking and teachers' explanations do not always 'sign-post' clearly how the pupils can improve their work.

The curriculum is well organised and is enriched by visits to places of interest, events at school and extra-curricular clubs which range from street dancing to mathathletics. The focus on real-life projects such as producing an art gallery and Tudor museum enthuses pupils and contributes to their good personal development. This together with weekend trips and the Year 6 residential visit, provide opportunities for pupils to broaden their personal and academic skills. For those pupils who join the school at different times of the year and/or have little or no English the curriculum is suitably adjusted to meet their individual needs, interests and enthusiasms. Senior staff acknowledge the need to extend and strengthen the provision of popular extra-curricular activities still further.

The school is rightly proud of its good care, guidance and support. The most vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the school's good links with external agencies. Staff can point to real successes in helping pupils overcome difficult histories and challenging episodes in their lives. The inclusion team provides a wide range of support to enable vulnerable pupils to play a full part in school life and is increasingly successful at engaging hard-to-reach families through the range of activities and services available from the children's centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite the many changes of staff in the recent past that have interrupted progress, the

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determination and commitment of the headteacher to improve the school is unwavering. She has established a new leadership team with clear lines of responsibility, which is focused on raising attainment. This has been effectively shared with all staff. Weaker teaching has been tackled well and there is a clear ambition to make sure that all lessons are good and that pupils achieve well. Consequently, teaching is improving and progress and learning are beginning to accelerate. Nevertheless, a number of leaders are newly appointed to the school, are new to their responsibilities, and although 'green shoots' are beginning to emerge, for many it is still too early to assess their full impact. The headteacher and her senior team complement each other well, and work together to guide and support staff. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and constructive so that the school has a true picture of its effectiveness and where it needs to improve. They acknowledge that, in order to raise standards and accelerate progress, leadership roles across the school need to be more sharply focused on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning against clear success criteria in order to accelerate the rate of improvement. The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that every pupil has an equal chance to learn. It works hard to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of pupils. For example, the school has been very successful in helping some pupils with previously challenging behaviour to again enjoy learning and make expected progress. Senior leaders guide staff so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are effective but recognise that occasionally, the most able pupils and some of those of Black African heritage do not do as well as other groups of learners.

Governors are fully supportive of the school's aims and ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. They visit the school often and have an accurate view of the school's performance. They challenge the school and hold it to account. The chair and vice chair of governors and headteacher form a productive partnership and are beginning to secure more rapid improvement in the quality of learning. The school has comprehensive and robust procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. Systems to keep pupils safe meet all government guidelines. The school has effectively evaluated its contribution to community cohesion, which is good. This has been achieved by developing and promoting a clear and detailed understanding of its own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures that exist within it.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly and are keen to learn and get off to a sound start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They play together well and are well behaved. The school's records show that children's attainment varies from year to year. The most recent assessment profiles show that overall, children's attainment on entry is generally below that which is expected for their age, and significantly so in mathematical development and in communication, language and thinking skills. By the time children leave Reception, their overall attainment remains below levels expected for their age in all areas except in linking sounds and letters and reading and in physical development where they come close to average.

Children enjoy a range of stimulating activities, particularly indoors. Access to the attractive outdoor area for Nursery and Reception children permits free-flow movement. However, the outdoor area has been resourced mainly for physical development and is not designed to extend progress in all six areas of learning and does not have a covered area for children to play in inclement weather. Senior leaders are aware of the need to improve outdoor provision and plans are already in place to address this.

Staff provide effective support for the children's welfare and there is a good balance of activities children choose for themselves and those led by an adult. While adults regularly assess and record what children know, understand and can do, they do not always use the information to set targets for future development with sufficient rigour. Consequently, the curriculum is not always adjusted to address areas of individual need and children's progress dips, particularly for more able children.

Senior managers oversee and monitor the quality of provision satisfactorily so that there is a sound understanding of how to develop the Early Years Foundation Stage further. During the recent past, external consultants have provided coaching and training for staff new to the Early Years Foundation Stage team.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The school enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of parents who returned questionnaires. Almost all respondents were very positive about the school and felt that it keeps pupils safe and helps them maintain a healthy lifestyle. A small number of parents felt that they would appreciate more opportunities to communicate with the school about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitefriars First and Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 420 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	47	35	43	5	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	37	46	57	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	38	40	49	6	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	33	40	49	6	7	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	29	36	44	54	5	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	32	43	53	8	10	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	28	49	60	4	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	30	39	48	5	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	25	41	51	13	16	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	26	46	57	9	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	22	42	52	12	15	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	21	26	47	58	7	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	40	40	49	5	6	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitefriars First and Middle School, Harrow, HA3 5RQ

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us to Whitefriars and for taking the time from your breaks to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you work and play. We feel your school is satisfactory, meaning that it does some things well while other things could be better.

We came to find out as much as we could about your school and now we would like to tell you what we said in the report we have written. Your headteacher and teachers make your school a welcoming place. We were particularly impressed by your attractively designed playground. You and your parents told us that you like school and that it is a caring and happy place where you feel safe. You are respectful, polite and considerate towards each other. Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed as are your parents. So we have asked them to:

- plan work that will challenge and engage you in all lessons, showing you ways to learn by yourselves, particularly for the more able amongst you
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- make sure you all attend as well as possible. You and your family can help by not taking holidays in term time.

Once again, it was very good to meet you all. We wish you and the school all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott

Lead inspector

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